# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

OCTOBER 1989 ONE DOLLAR

The problem is our memory. We can't remember the good old days. Our wonderful memory stores facts and figures, formulas and computations, but loses things that once were and now aren't. I read an article recently about the dusky seaside sparrow. It's gone now, one of the many casualties of tradeoffs we made in board rooms covered with maps and stickpins. But, what struck me was that it once not too long ago flourished in the marshes around Cape Canaveral in Florida. Once as many as 6,000 sparrows flitted among the rushes there, and as late as 1968 there were nearly 2,000 of them left. Thirteen years ago, they were gone from the marshes forever. But who misses those sparrows? Who truly feels an aching loss when staring out over the marsh? Not many people, I'd wager. Instead, with the sun rising over the water on the quiet marsh, still full of wildlife that count the area home, we think not of loss, but of gain. We think how lucky we are to be here at sunrise on a wakening marsh instead of stuck in backed-up traffic, sitting idly on an interstate somewhere on our way to work.

It's a good thing for the most part, this short-term memory of ours, for if we grieved too long for things we've lost, we might never recover enough to lift our eyes and marvel again. On the other hand, it's often what we forget that counts. It's the missing people, the missing plants and animals and places that stir our souls. We try hard to remember the shape of a hand, the afternoon light in the trees, the sound of a whisper in the night. But the restorative powers of our minds fade the memories. The ache dulls, and there is not much we can do to remember. We try to record the loss with words and artifacts from another time, another place. Still, when we read a history of the world, when we touch the feathers of a lifeless bird, the jewels of a crown or the photo of a bison-covered plain, it is only with a sense of wonder or longing—hardly a sense of loss.

It is so hard to communicate loss to others, to make them actually *feel* that emptiness in a heart, the cold loneliness in words. A wise professor of mine once had a favorite saying when the wind was howling and the winter rain falling: "It's cold as banished hope," she said. "Can you think of anything more bitter than to be without hope?" It's the hopelessness of loss that chills the soul. How do you write about that?

Perhaps that's why it's so hard to convince people that Virginia Beach, Nags Head, Ocean City, and the Gulf Coast of Florida were all so much more wonderful, more awe-inspiring, more magical when nobody was there. After all, who can dispute the beauty of a well-planned resort, the comfort and luxury of a lovely condo on the beach? We see the ospreys, the pelicans, the sandpipers, the egrets, and the herons all co-existing peacefully among the marinas and sand dunes. We do not see what went before us. You see, we do not remember what we gave for the taking, what we lost in the deal to transform our environment. Oh yes, we'll get back the gulls and the squirrels and the robins and the raccoons and the bugs and the flower gardens that calm our spirits and nourish our souls. But what of the wonders we gave up to seal the deal? What part of our soul did we bargain away for our happiness?

There is a story about a religious man who one day gathered his students around him. Without a word held up a single flower. Only one man signalled with his eyes that he understood.

Perhaps it is time that we began to count our losses.—*Virginia Shepherd*

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*Snow geese* (Chen caerulescens); *photo by Gary Meszaros.*

Cover: Ring-necked duck (*Aythya collaris*); photo by Larry R. Ditto. Back cover: Fall leaves; photo by Cindie Brunner.

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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources

*Photos provided by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.*

# Just Say No

Kinsale, a waterfront village in Virginia's Northern Neck, shares features with many Tidewater towns: a picturesque harbor, historic buildings, quiet streets shaded by ancient oaks, a close-knit community of longtime residents in a scenic setting. Unfortunately, these attributes are bringing problems to Kinsale that are increasingly common in the region—land prices are rising and the population is growing as suburban and second-home development reaches out from the cities. Where Kinsale differs from many similar towns, however, is that its residents have set up a private foundation to preserve their community's character. As mounting development pressure propels this foundation in Kinsale to focus on land conservation, it joins a growing national movement of local organizations that are protecting undeveloped land.

Across the country, the landscape is peppered with tracts of open space protected by groups of local residents like those in Kinsale, who joined forces to prevent its development. In many cases, the group formed in someone's kitchen upon learning a farm down the road was about to be sold for subdivision or shopping mall construction. The groups' members rarely consider themselves activists. Most likely, they just think of themselves as neighbors who value open space.

This grassroots method of controlling community development and the quality of life in an area dates back to 1853, when the first "village improvement society" was organized in a Massachusetts community to set aside local land for public enjoyment. As suburban growth mushrooms, such groups are becoming the fastest growing conservation movement in the country, numbering 743 at last count. Although most now call themselves "land trusts" or "conservancies," they all share the same purpose—to preserve undeveloped land.

*There is a way for the "little people" to say no to the development of the open space surrounding their community. They're called "land trusts" and they're proving that people can do something for the public good.*

"I think people are angry at what they see happening to their communities, the changing character," says Jean Hocker, executive director of the Land Trust Exchange, a national organization representing land trusts. "They see land they thought would be open space—whether a farm or a woodlot they used to play in as kids—turned into shopping centers. They see a problem and they're looking for a solution."

Nationally, the land trust community protects over 2 million acres of land (excluding land protected by large, national organizations such as The Nature Conservancy). Land trusts tend to be community-based and their smaller scope is reflected in their names: the Kinsale Foundation, the Severn River (Maryland) Land Trust, the Brandywine (Pennsylvania) Conservancy, the Marin (California) Agricultural Land Trust, the Dutchess County (New York) Land Trust.

Land trusts protect land for a wide variety of reasons, including the preservation of farmland to maintain economic opportunities for farmers, the retention of open space to provide for scenic views, and the constraint of development in watersheds to improve water quality. "Whether biologic, economic, productive, aesthetic, spiritual, educational, or ethical," says Ms. Hocker, "the reasons for protecting land are as diverse as the landscape itself."

Land trusts are usually organized as private, nonprofit corporations that use an assortment of voluntary, tax-deductible mechanisms to protect land. Most have memberships that are open to the public, and most are started and run entirely by volunteers. A 1988 Land Trust Exchange survey showed that about half have budgets under $10,000 a year, and just under a quarter have budgets over $250,000 a year.

# To "Progress"

*by Christopher Rigby*

*Waterfront property in the Chesapeake Bay region runs a high risk of being developed unless citizen groups take action to preserve the health and quality of their environment. Land trusts are the long awaited answer to the people's cry for help in controlling their environmental destiny.* **Below:** *Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay.*

Their local scope gives land trusts several advantages over larger conservation organizations. They move quickly, with little red tape, in response to market opportunities. Perhaps most importantly, local trusts are a network of neighbors who can talk to landowners with a level of credibility outsiders never have. "People like the local feel, that people they know are doing it," says Ms. Hocker of the Land Trust Exchange. "They expect less from government, and are saying: 'We'd better do it ourselves.' "

Although local trusts have unique strengths, they often have limited technical knowledge. Conversely, while many large organizations have expertise in land protection, budget constraints limit the amount of land they can conserve. To join these complimentary strengths and increase their effectiveness, several conservation organizations, including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), have programs for assisting local groups in forming land trusts.

The process of incorporation can be surprisingly simple. Steps include assembling a board, drafting a corporate charter and filing applications with state and federal agencies. CBF also provides trusts with ongoing technical assistance in pursuing land transactions and administers a revolving land fund that can be used to help finance acquisitions.

Land trusts use a wide variety of tools to protect land. The three most popular are accepting land donations, accepting conservation easement donations, and purchasing land with funds donated from members, foundations and corporations. With real estate's rapid appreciation over the last several years, however, purchasing land with donated funds is becoming increasingly difficult, and land trusts are relying on innovative—and often complex—approaches to achieve their

protection goals.

Conservation easements, for example, are legal instruments for restricting the use of land. Easements allow landowners to give up some rights to their land, such as the right to develop or subdivide, while retaining ownership and exclusive use of the property for any purposes other than those they choose to restrict. Easements do not permit the public access to property unless the owner specifically provides for such access. Easements are highly flexible, and can be tailored to meet an individual landowner's needs. They become a part of the deed, and run with the land, ensuring permanent protection even after it is sold. Donated easments also usually generate tax benefits when they meet the IRS's criteria for conservation purposes.

Another increasingly popular strategy for financing land protection is "limited development." A combination of other procedures rather than a new tool in itself, limited development involves the partial development of a property in order to finance conservation of the rest. "It really is a procedure for accomplishing conflicting goals: the preservation of sensitive land and the accommodation of the owner's financial needs," says Debi Lee, Director of the Chesapeake office of the Trust of Public Land, a national trust specializing in limited development transactions.

For example, a farmer could use limited development as an alternative to selling his farm for residential subdivision. A land trust would work with the owner to create a conservation plan that might involve building three homes on one corner of the property. The trust would then record a conservation easement over the rest, insuring its continued use as farmland. Thus the farmer receives a profit from the sale of three building lots, a developer has a project, and the trust retains an easement that preserves the community's agricultural character.

Although the taxable value of a particular tract may decline when an easement is placed on it, research by the Urban Land Institute shows that open space protection enhances the local tax base by making the community more attractive; many people are willing to pay more for land when they can be confident adjacent properties will not be developed. A 1980 study by the Conservation Foundation found that open space protection in New Jersey increased their tax base by increasing adjacent property values. The study concluded that open space protection also leads to more cost-efficient development by encouraging improved site design.

Practices such as clustering development around infrastructure, for example, minimize expenditures on roads and sewers. Suburban sprawl, by contrast, requires an extensive and expensive network of roads, sewers and power lines. Combined with Best Management Practices such as setbacks

## Land Trust Workshop

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is sponsoring a land trust workshop for all interested citizens and groups. The workshop will be held Saturday, November 18, 1989 at the Warsaw, Virginia campus of Rappahannock Community College.

The workshop will focus on forming land trusts and land conservation techniques and tools.

For further information, contact Estie Thomas in CBF's Richmond office, (804) 780-1392.

*The preservation of open space, particularly that surrounding water, not only preserves the quality of life of the community, but protects the quality of life underwater that is affected by siltation, erosion and pollution.*

## A Case Study in Success: The American Chestnut Land Trust

In the fall of 1986, a waterfront community of 250 families in Scientist Cliffs, Maryland, faced a situation becoming increasingly common in Tidewater Virginia. An hour from Washington, the area was attractive to commuters, and the local real estate market was booming. Then one day 450 forested acres buffering the neighborhood from the city's burgeoning suburbs went on the market.

To prevent the property's development, residents consulted CBF, which recommended forming a land trust. Within six months of this initial consultation, the group filed articles of incorporation and by-laws, selected a board, filed for tax-exempt status with the IRS and negotiated a contract to purchase the property for $850,000.

The American Chestnut Land Trust's (ACLT) initial fund drive raised $400,000 in one year, enabling ACLT to close on the contract in October 1987. Most of the money came from donations of several thousand dollars, and a large percentage of the community contributed. Two years later, by participating in an county program providing for the sale of development rights on farm and forest land, ACLT completed payments on the property. "Nobody's had any regrets," says Peter Vogt, Vice President of ACLT, "and some people who were initially skeptical have even come back and said, 'if you need any more money, let us know.' " As ACLT works on new acquisitions, its members enjoy a rare level of control over their community's future—and part of the world they leave their children.

If you would like more information on forming land trusts or land conservation techniques, contact Estie Thomas, Virginia Land Planner, at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Richmond office, (804) 780-1392. □

and buffer strips, clustering development away from sensitive resources can have a less direct economic benefit as well: "Economic prosperity and protection of the resource base go hand in hand," says Sandy Hillyer, Director of Lands Programs for CBF. "In the long run, they're inseparable. If we fail to protect our resources, we deprive ourselves of the very things that attract new businesses and jobs."

In December 1988, a group called the Year 2020 Panel of Experts published a report entitled *Population Growth and Development in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*. Endorsed by the Governors of Virginia and Maryland, the 2020 Panel's report contains some sobering statistics. The study forecasts an increase in population over the next 30 years of 2.6 million people, or 20 percent. Virginia's population is anticipated to grow by 32 percent. Moreover, the authors write, "if land consumption continues at the same pace as before [1980], 59 percent more land will be developed [in 2020] than was developed in 1980." Even more striking, the Panel found that we are developing more land per person than we used to:

> *"Although the accuracy of projections is always debatable, it is clear from experience that per capita land consumption is now taking place at a greater rate than was once the case. For example, in 1950, each resident in the region accounted for .18 acres of developed land. During the three decades from 1950 to 1980, each new resident accounted for .65 acres of new development. The result is that the regional average of developed land per person has nearly doubled to .33 acres."*

Regulatory programs such as zoning and subdivision ordinances provide an essential framework for implementing growth management strategies. However, they are subject to the give-and-take of the political process. As an expression of social values dominant at the time they are enacted, land use regulations are also vulnerable to amendment in response to shifts in the prevailing political climate. More importantly, regulations are only as good as their enforcement, and effective enforcement is dependent on both budgetary support and enduring political resolve.

These limitations are causing legislators and government officials in several states to promote joint ventures with land trusts as a way of leveraging public revenues and achieving protection that bolsters land use regulations. In Anne Arundel County, Maryland, for example, the County Executive recently pledged $350,000 and a staff person to the Severn River Land Trust. California makes grants available to land trusts for land acquisition. The Maryland and Florida legislatures are currently studying similar programs. New Jersey's "Green Trust" program makes grants and loans to municipalities, which often work cooperatively with private groups for the same purpose. Maryland also encourages land protection by granting 15-year property tax exemptions over some properties on which easements are donated.

Virginia has lagged behind other states in land trust activity partly because until 1988, a facet of Virginia common law presented legal obstacles to court enforcement of conservation easements held by local land trusts and other nonprofit organizations. Last year, the legislature passed a bill backed by CBF and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) that removed those obstacles for nonprofit organizations that have been in existence for five or more years. Such organizations are now able to hold and enforce easements, and new trusts in existence for less than five years are permitted to hold easements jointly with older organizations such as CBF, TNC and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. After their first five years, new organizations can hold easements alone.

So, the tools *are* available for a community to take hold of its future. Gone are the days when you simply shrugged, "Well, you can't stop 'progress.' " Now you can.

For more information on land trusts, contact the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Suite 815, Heritage Building, 1001 East Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219, 804/780-1392. □

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*Christopher Rigby is a land conservation coordinator for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.*

# Virginia's Hunter Education Instructors—Who are they?

Virginia has some 1,400 hunter education instructors, nearly all of whom are volunteers. Here's a look behind the teacher in them.

by Bob Gooch

Dedication, patience, a desire to serve one's fellow man, a deep concern for the image of hunting and the needless loss of lives. These are the characteristics shared by Virginia's elite corps of hunter education instructors.

"There are approximately 1,400 of them," said Captain Herb Foster, Hunter Safety Coordinator for the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, "mostly volunteers." Game wardens also teach hunter education courses.

It was the end of the 1988-89 hunting season and Foster was reflecting on Virginia's safety record, one which had shown a marked improvement. "Our instructors have trained some 30,000 new hunters since July and we may reach 40,000 to 50,000 this year."

Sure, the new blaze orange requirement had played a role, but it didn't overshadow the hours of patient instruction on the part of hunter education instructors across Virginia. There's no adequate measure of the impact these dedicated people are making on the future of hunting in the Old Dominion.

Working without pay, giving up hours of personal time, and spending long evenings away from families and homes, these men and women are dedicated to turning out safe and skilled hunters for Virginia's fields, marshes, and woods. They're determined to curb the senseless rash of accidents that have marred so many hunting seasons.

Most are hunters with a deep interest in firearms. They also enjoy working with young people—and the unique opportunity to serve their communities. Visits with a few of them will provide an insight into the kind of people they are, their personalities, and the characteristics that make them click.

Though they range in age from their early twenties to senior citizens, most learned about guns and hunting the traditional way, under the tutelage of elders—parents, older brothers or sisters, and relatives or neighbors. Formal training was not available when

many came of hunting age.

"My grandfather taught me to shoot," said Brian Berger, a Richmond research biologist. "We shot his old Model 63 Winchester 22. I hunted squirrels with it last fall." Frank Taylor of Millboro grew up in Arkansas where boyhood and hunting were synonymous. "I came from a hunting family," he said. George Mason, a Strasburg merchant, the most recent recipient of the William D. Morgan Memorial Award, began hunting at an early age with his father, a Shenandoah County farm boy. "Just about everyone hunted when I was a kid." said Steve Hoffman of Brightwood. "My father, grandfather, and a lot of Madison County neighbors brought me along."

Jeri McCoy of Greenwood, Mike Clifford of Nottoway, and Paul Siple of Covington followed slightly different approaches. McCoy, fresh out of Ohio University and working on some conservation projects with friends in the Ohio Division of Wildlife, began hunting under their tutelage. She was soon teaching hunter education courses and continued to do so when she moved to Albemarle County in the early 1980s.

Though he grew up in Alleghany County where hunting is a way of life, it was not until he moved to Bath County to teach and coach that Paul Siple took up hunting. "Everyone hunted," he said. "Any man who didn't was considered an oddball, so I joined my friends in the field. They taught me hunting."

Mike Clifford of Nottoway County learned to hunt pretty much on his own. "I'm from the Dismal Swamp," he jokes, "but my Dad didn't hunt." The Chesapeake native graduated from

*photo by Cindie Brunner.*

*Frank Taylor (**above**) Mike Clifford (**below**): Both recipients of the William D. Morgan Memorial Award and the Virginia Wildlife Federation Hunter Education Award, Frank Taylor and Mike Clifford have made Virginia's Hunter Education Program shine. Taylor has taught over 12,000 students, and is using his retirement years to teach hunter education in every school classroom that will have him, while Clifford has trained the best young hunters in North America, bringing home championship titles from the North American Hunter Education Championships with his teams two years in a row.*

*photo by Spike Knuth.*

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University with a degree in forestry and wildlife.

An interest in young people is another common trait among hunter safety instructors.

Jeri McCoy teaches in the Charlottesville public school system and is a recent recipient of the Distinguished Teacher Award. She also coaches the Charlottesville High School tennis team, and recently wrote the script and acted in a movie called *Aids Alert for Youth*. "She's highly professional and in complete control in the classroom," said Tom McElroy, game warden from Greene County who has worked with her in hunter education courses. "She's a good person, but fool around in her class and you'll get called down. Doesn't matter whether you're 12 or 52."

Both Steve Hoffman, a furniture refinisher, and Mike Clifford, a 4-H Club Extension Agent, are adult leaders for 4-H shooting clubs. Clifford's teams have won five state championships, and have proved themselves the best in the nation by coming away with the junior team title in the North American Hunter Education Championship last year and the senior team championship title this year. "Mike gets along with everyone," said David Wooten, a hunter education instructor who works with him, "particularly the kids. He has a way with them." Wooten credits Clifford for heading a fund drive that raised $8,000 to send his team to Canada. "He's an organizer and works all the time. Never gets home until almost bedtime."

Paul Siple is a retired associate director of the Covington Boys Home and served many years as a high school athletic coach. He still officiates local

athletic events. Brian Berger has been active in the Boy Scouts of America. Like Clifford and Hoffman, George Mason coaches hunter education teams, and his teams have won three state championships.

Hunters education instructors tend to begin with their own families. Brian Berger, the recipient of the first William D. Morgan Memorial Award, is the father of two college-age boys. Both are Eagle Scouts and graduates of hunter education courses. "Both plan to take the instructor's course," he said. Frank Taylor's wife Kay and son Wayne are certified hunter education instructors and they serve as assistants. George Mason's sons all hunt. His oldest is a hunter education instructor and the others have completed the basic course, as have his wife and daughter. His wife helps him with his classes.

"Neither my wife nor daughters hunt," said Hoffman, "but they enjoy small-bore rifle shooting." His wife and youngest daughter are handgun enthusiasts.

Mike Clifford and his wife lost their only son to leukemia, but have reared foster sons. "I put all of them through my hunter education courses," he said.

Tragedies or near tragedies have influenced many instructors. Paul Siple suffered a personal injury that keeps him teaching even at age 67. "I took one of the boys from the home turkey hunting," he said. "I put him on a stand, and told him to stay there. I set up a couple of ridges away. Typical of teenagers, he couldn't stay still for long and began roaming. He mistook me for a turkey and shot, hitting my hand, but fortunately he was far enough away that my jacket stopped most of the pellets." Mistaking hunters for game is a common mistake among inexperienced hunters. Such a mistake cost William D. Morgan his life. His parents established the award honoring his memory hoping it might save the lives of other hunters.

*Paul Siple: Still teaching at age 67, Paul Siple has been a hunter education instructor since 1961. He has trained over 3,800 students and has been the recipient of the prestigious William D. Morgan Memorial Award for hunter education service and the annual Virginia Wildlife Federation Hunter Education Award; photo by Cindie Brunner.*

"Paul enjoys hunting and working with hunters," said Sharon Tingler, a graduate of one of Siple's classes. "He's very enthusiastic when he gets a point across to a child or gets a lively discussion going. You can see his eyes sparkle with delight. His enthusiasm is contagious and he uses it to stress hunting safety."

A hunting fatality got Steve Hoffman into hunter education. As a volunteer fireman he was on a search and rescue mission for a lost hunter and found the victim almost dead from a bullet wound. The young hunter died a few hours later. "It was so senseless," said Hoffman, "and I decided I could help prevent that waste of human life."

A few instructors also enjoy range firing and even competitive shooting. Jeri McCoy was on the Ohio University archery team, and Brian Berger was a member of the University of Richmond small-bore rifle team. He later shot on a U.S. Air Force pistol team. "I guess I was a shooter first and then a hunter," he said.

Community service and a desire to serve one's fellow man are also strong among Virginia's hunter education instructors. Steve Hoffman, in addition to being a volunteer fireman, serves on the Madison County Board of Supervisors and the Central Virginia Regional Jail Board. "Steve is a good boy," said Bob Crigler, retired Madison County game warden. "He's

very conscientious and gives freely of his time. He has a good rapport with the kids and he's a good instructor." Jeri McCoy teaches CPR courses for the American Red Cross and the American Heart Association, and Brian Berger is active in the Izaak Walton League.

Frank Taylor and Brian Berger have law enforcement backgrounds, careers with a high respect for firearms. Berger served a stint with the Virginia State Police. Taylor came from an Arkansas law enforcement family, and served as a radio dispatcher when he was in high school. He later worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a move that brought him to Virginia. "Frank's an old country boy whom you can't fool," said Gordon Hunter who worked with Taylor in the U.S. Forest Service. "He has more talent than is obvious at first. He sort of comes on like Will Rogers. Give him a .38 caliber pistol on the range and he'll do just average, but let a fox run across a field and he'll take it if he wants to. He's a good instructor who can establish himself quickly with the kids."

While hunting interests vary among Virginia's hunter education instructors, both deer and turkeys are high on the list. Berger hunts just about all game except waterfowl, while Siple hunts squirrels as well as deer and turkeys. Taylor, a U.S. Forest Service retiree, is also a deer, squirrel, and turkey hunter. Jeri McCoy hunted deer, rabbits, and squirrels with a younger brother back in Ohio, and hopes to continue in that vein in Virginia.

George Mason is a big-game hunter, primarily deer and bear with out-of-state trips for elk. "I'm getting into bow-hunting," he said.

*Steve Hoffman: A furniture refinisher by trade, Hoffman is also a volunteer fireman and member of the Madison County Board of Supervisors. It's hard to figure out where he found the over 200 hours he has given so far to the Virginia Hunter Education Program since 1985. Still, he keeps giving to keep our hunters safe; photo by Cindie Brunner.*

"I'm a rabbit hunter," said Steve Hoffman. "I like to whoop and holler and get the cottontails going. Don't like the silence associated with turkey hunting." He also hunts squirrels.

Deer, ducks, geese and quail are Mike Clifford's game. "But I do all kinds of hunting," he said.

Jeri McCoy enjoyed trapping with her brother in Ohio. "We caught beaver, 'coons, fox, and muskrats," she said—a bit wistfully.

Steve Hoffman is a trout fisherman, and Frank Taylor opened the 1989-90 trout season with a limit of rainbows from the Jackson River. Paul Siple also likes trout fishing.

Hunter education instructors speak highly of the cooperation and support they get from the Game Department. "I like working with them," said Steve Hoffman. Brian Berger echoed those thoughts. But Berger would like to see the hunter education course include some range firing and a hunter safety trail with dry firing. Hoffman would like to see the master instructor designation based on hours rather than on the number of students trained. "We rural instructors can't compete with the big metropolitan area instructors on the basis of numbers," he observed.

Spend some time visiting with a Virginia hunter education instructor and you'll come away feeling good about the future of hunting in the Old Dominion. As their students begin to swell the hunting ranks across the state, the somewhat tarnished image of hunting is sure to improve. Those graduates of hunter education courses will see that it does. □

*Bob Gooch is an outdoor newspaper columnist and author of several books on hunting and fishing. He lives in Troy, near Charlottesville.*

# Old-timer Tricks

## The author recalls some squirrel hunting tricks the "old-timers" taught him in his youth. They're tried and true.

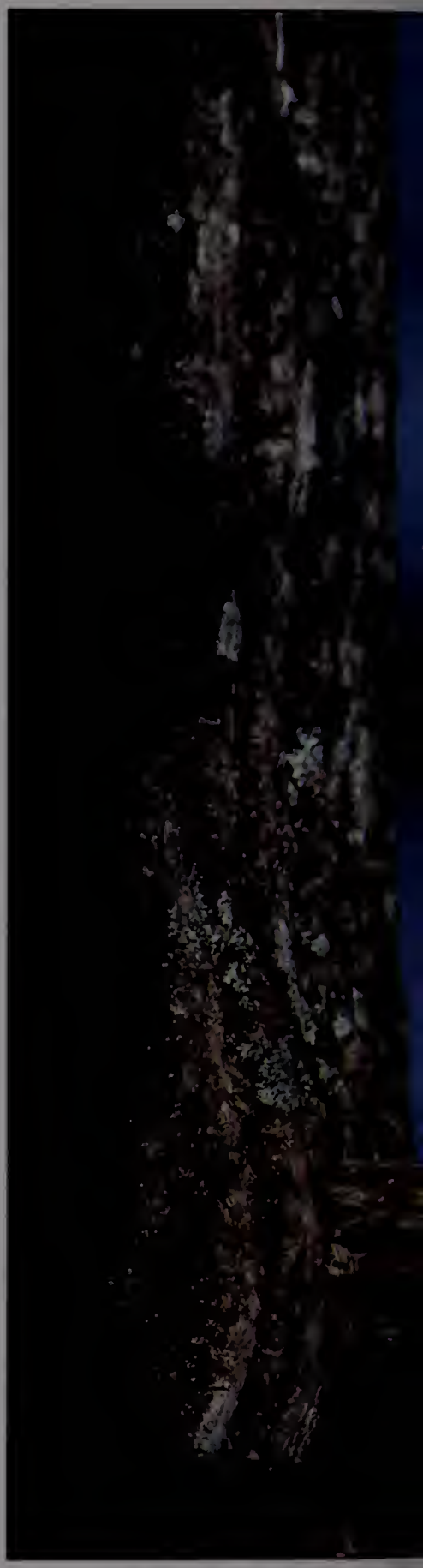
by Tom Roseberry

The 50's and 60's were a grand time to be alive in rural Blacksburg, Virginia. There seemed to be so much land available for hunting and fishing that a young man could never see it all. Life was slow paced, and people's attitudes towards hunting and fishing reflected that. It was not unusual for a group of old-timers to spend a Saturday discussing their prowess as hunters.

I knew some of those old guys and three in particular haunt my memories. Old John, Buck, and Will were excellent outdoorsmen. They hunted almost every animal indigenous to the State of Virginia except possums. John told me once that possum hunting was kin to rat hunting and he was not about to hunt rats.

Squirrels were among their favorite game. There was only one thing each of these guys would rather do than hunt squirrels. That was to tell someone else how to hunt them.

I spent a lot of time last season reflecting on these guys and their abilities. It was not hard to remember how they had taken me under their wings when I was a kid. I still wonder if they felt sorry for me and my lack of outdoor skills or if they merely needed someone to laugh at on some of their excursions. At any rate, I distinctly remember a lot of extra work on those hunts, things like building the fire, pouring the coffee, and skinning the squirrels so "I could get the feel of it."



*Gray squirrel* (Sciurus carolinensis); *photo by William S. Lea.*

*"Usually, den holes are high up in the trees, so you and me have a tough time peeking in to see if anybody's home. I generally try to spend a little time just watching a den hole." Photo by Bruce Ingram.*

Old John and the rest were excellent teachers. So, from my position a few feet away at the cook table in camp, I would get some coffee ready and listen.

Old John would get sort of a gravelly tone to his voice when he described techniques he had developed over the years. To hear him tell it, squirrel hunting was a year-round endeavor. He once said that you had to know where they were before you could harvest them.

I remember one evening particularly well. We were seated around a stone fireplace in a rustic old cabin that all of us had contributed to building. My job had been to carry the water and anything else they needed.

Old John held his cup out and said, "Pour me a little coffee, Boy, while I tell these old boys about trailing squirrels."

While pouring the coffee in their cups, the thought struck me that it would be pretty tough to trail a squirrel through the woods. I had seen them on the ground, and I knew that it was difficult even to watch where one went.

John cleared things up quickly with some information I have never forgotten. "All of us know that finding a squirrel trail on the ground without snow would be about as easy as finding a girlfriend for the boy over there. Why, if you found one, you'd never figure out where the squirrel went. But, you can find what I call 'bark' trails.

"Shortly after the season ends each year," he continued, "I check out my favorite hunting spots to determine if there are animals left. I begin by checking the bases of trees that I know squirrels have used in the past. I look for light-colored patches of bark about a foot or two off the ground. A squirrel

*"The easiest way to monitor food use is to locate as many piles of fresh cuttings where the squirrels have been eating hickory nuts and acorns as you can."*

will jump from the ground to the trunk of a tree every time he intends to climb it. When that happens, his little claws grab the bark and a little bit of it is pulled loose. Over an extended period of time, all this action makes the bark appear to be discolored.

"Usually, a squirrel will approach this tree from the same direction each time unless he is spooked for some reason. So, you'll only find these patches on one side of a tree."

I lapsed into a daydream for a second or two, my head filled with thoughts of a scratched up tree full of giant squirrels.

Old Buck brought me back to reality quickly with a question. "John, ain't you the one who discovered how to tell if a squirrel was using a den or not?"

"Yep, I reckon I am," John said. "Squirrels aren't much different than you and me when it comes to houses. Once he finds suitable quarters, a squirrel is likely to use the same den year after year. About the only reasons he'll leave are for survival. If the food supply runs out, he'll go somewhere in search of a new supply. He or she will sometimes leave to find a mate. On rare occasions, one of you old goats might get lucky and whack one with one of your rusty old guns.

"Usually, den holes are high up in the trees, so you and me have a tough time peeking in to see if anybody's home. I generally try to spend a little time just watching a den hole. Sometimes you can see squirrels going in and out.

"If I think that squirrels are using the den, but I don't see them, I study the area immediately around the hole. A lot of activity will cause the bark right next to the hole to be lighter in color than the rest of the tree. I think the reason for this is because old Mr. Squirrel spends some time every day just inside the hole with his feet resting on the edge. Kinda' like he's inspecting his front yard. Not only that, every time the animal goes in or out of his den, his claws scratch the bark for a good hold. I call these holes 'scratchin' dens' because they hold squirrels."

Loaded with this bounty of information about scratched up trees and squirrel dens, a young man could have spent years wandering around the woods. I might have, too, if Old Will hadn't chimed in with a question I should have asked. "John, how do you know where to find these here dens? Heck, the woods is full o' trees."

John held his cup out for me to pour him some more coffee. For the first time in our relationship, I was asked a question. "Boy, how far from your house is the kitchen?"

All eyes were on me. If this was a trick question, it was a good one. I took a chance. "John, the kitchen is right in the house."

"Right."

John's statement ended so abruptly that I felt like reaching down his throat and pulling the rest of it out. "*Right.*" What kind of answer was that?

He leaned back in his chair and lit up a cigarette. Blue smoke twisted into the air.

"A squirrel's house is generally right in the kitchen," John said. "If the kitchen is empty, then the squirrel will be out shopping somewhere else. That's why the thing I look for besides den holes and bark trails, is a good supply of mast, like acorns. If the food supply isn't there, you'll waste your time looking for squirrels.

"The easiest way to monitor food use is to locate as many piles of fresh cuttings where the squirrels have been eating hickory nuts and acorns as you can. These piles of cuttings will give you an indication if an animal is using the area on a regular basis or not. If it is, then the cuttings will remain fresh looking and get bigger as fall approaches."

In the years since then, I have applied the techniques that Old John and the guys shared with me. I am proud to have known them, to have shared their squirrel stew and biscuits. (I did get a little tired of pouring coffee, though.) I am also sure that the techniques work.

As a matter of fact, I am so confident with Old John's ideas that maybe you and I could get in my old truck and go hunting. I know this place by a stream, near a long ridge where the oaks grow tall . . . □

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*T. W. Roseberry, Jr. is a freelance writer who lives in Salem.*

# Coming to the Rescue . . . of Waterfowl

*Ducks are in deep trouble. With the loss of wetlands to agriculture, urban and industrial development, their future looks grim. Here's how we're coming to the rescue.*

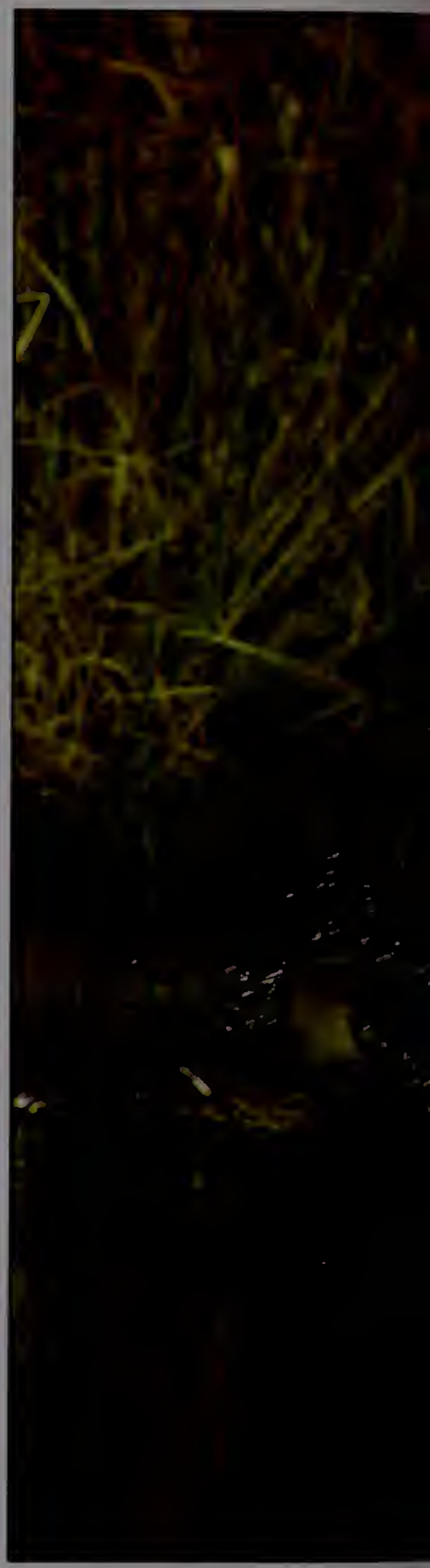
*by Fairfax Settle*

*Ducks in Crisis, Ducks in Distress, Waterfowl in Trouble* and similar headlines have highlighted magazine and newspaper articles about the plight of continental waterfowl populations during what has been called the "Duck Depression of the 1980s." The pessimism refers to the declining numbers of waterfowl, particularly ducks, in many regions of North America. The 1989 breeding populations of nine of the 10 principal duck species surveyed are below the average for the 35-year period 1955-1989. Pintails, blue-winged teal, and scaup are at all-time lows. The 1989 fall flight index of ducks is estimated to be 64 million, the second lowest fall flight index on record. Reasons for the decline are numerous—habitat loss, adverse weather conditions including prolonged drought, invasion of noxious weeds, pollution, sedimentation, toxic chemicals, increased predation, illegal hunting—the list goes on. The real and lasting culprit, however, is the loss of wetland habitat.

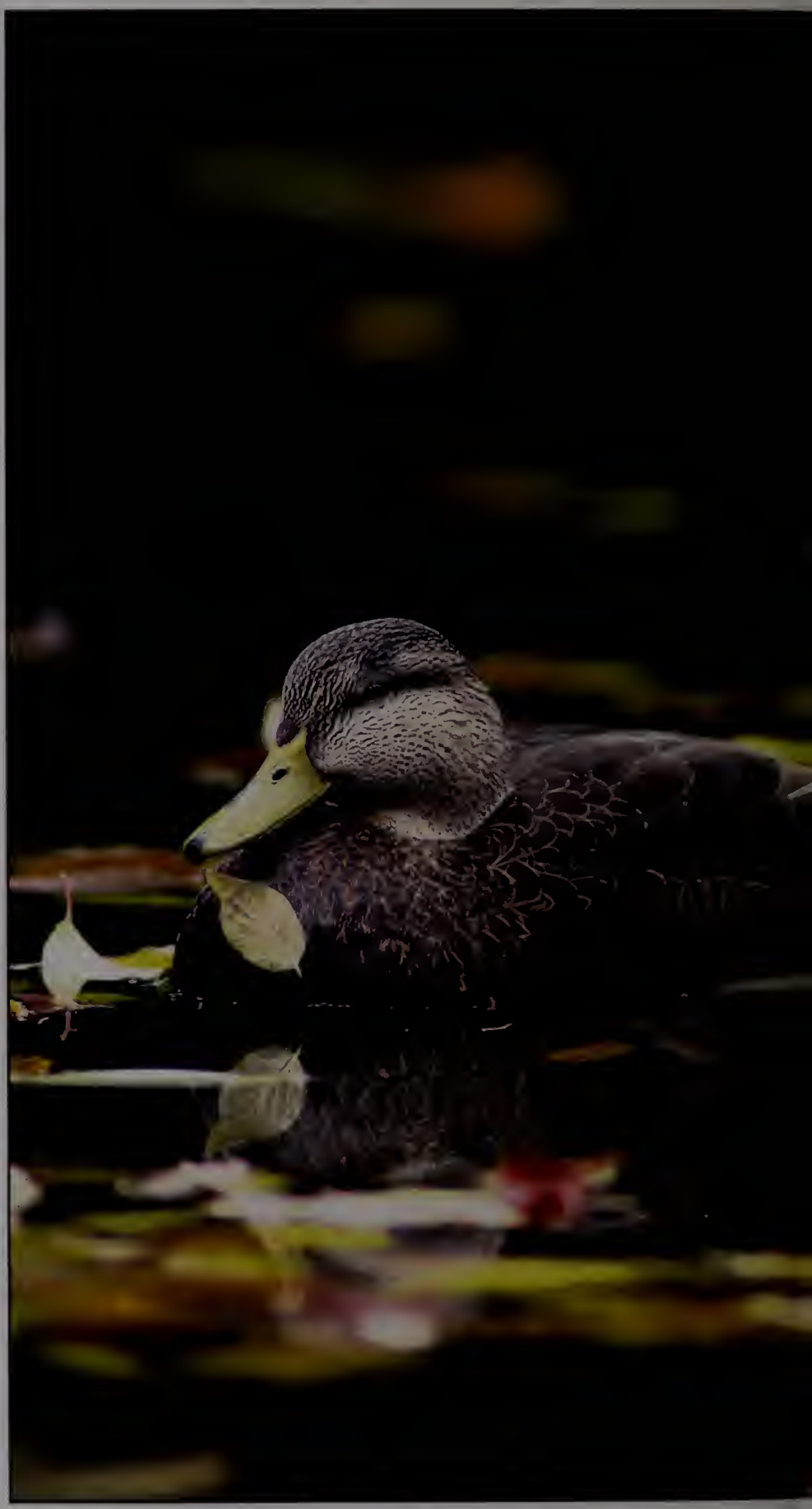
More than half of the wetlands that existed in the United States in colonial times has been destroyed. Currently nearly a half million acres are destroyed annually in the United States, mostly by agricultural practices but also by urban and industrial development. In Virginia, an estimated six percent of coastal and inland vegetated wetlands were lost between 1956 and 1977, averaging 3,000 acres annually. The major cause of inland wetland loss was direct conversion of wetlands to cropland. Urban development had its largest impact on coastal wetlands.

For generations people considered wetlands as wastelands, but today wetland values are well documented. In addition to providing vital habitats for numerous plants and animals, wetlands provide flood damage protection, erosion control and water quality improvement by serving as sediment traps and nutrient filters.

*Opposite: Drake mallard* (Anas platyrhynchos); *photo by Mark Wallner.*



*The alarming decline of waterfowl across the country has prompted a continent-wide effort to restore and protect waterfowl habitat and populations. In Virginia, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is orchestrating waterfowl restoration projects, from wetlands protection and restoration to public education and training.* **Right**: *Male and female American black ducks* (Anas rubripes), *a species in distress; photo by Rob Simpson.*



What can be done to stop and reverse the decline of waterfowl numbers? The answer is simple—stop the destruction of wetlands. Easier said than done. However, on May 14, 1986 then Secretary of the Interior Donald P. Hodel, and Canada's Minister of the Environment Thomas McMillan, signed the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), an innovative international partnership to save waterfowl. This is perhaps the most important single action affecting waterfowl welfare since the enactment of such conservation milestones as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, the Federal Duck Stamp Act of 1934, and the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937. The NAWMP is a simple but ambitious plan which identifies habitat conservation needs in specific regions, makes recommendations for resolving problems and sets population goals for ducks, geese and swans. The duck goals for North America are based on a breeding duck population estimate of 62 million which should produce a fall flight in excess of 100 million. This level was achieved most recently during the 1970-79 period.

The NAWMP has a 15-year horizon and will continue to the year 2000. The price tag is placed at approximately 1.5 billion dollars—far too massive to be executed by national or state/provincial governments alone. A strong commitment from private organizations as well as from individual citizens will be essential. The NAWMP has organized regional Joint Ventures in order to incorporate the agency/private sector coalition and to achieve the goals of the plan.

Various Joint Ventures have been established in the U.S. and Canada to unite grassroots level partnerships to achieve specific objectives. There are priority Joint Ventures underway in

the prairie pothole areas of both countries, along the Gulf Coast, lower Mississippi Valley, central valley of California, and eastern Canada. The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (AC-JV) addresses conservation needs of diverse wetland types from Maine to South Carolina. This Joint Venture greatly expands the goals and objectives identified in the NAWMP for the Atlantic Coast. The stated goal of the AC-JV is to protect and manage priority wetland habitats for migration, wintering and production of waterfowl, with special consideration to black ducks and other wildlife. In Virginia alone, 60,400 acres have been identified for protection or enhancement in focus areas located east of Highway Route 29, as shown in the accompanying table.

Wetlands protection through fee acquisition will be used on only a small percentage of the vast acreage within the JV focus areas. Conservation easements, cooperative agreements, leasing programs, new wetland protective legislation, financial incentives, extension/education, wetland restoration, open marsh water management, moist soil management, vegetation control, mitigation and improved interagency cooperation are all strategies that can be utilized to protect and enhance wetlands for waterfowl and other game and nongame species of wildlife.

Ducks Unlimited MARSH (Matching Aid to Restore State Habitat) projects have been funded within our Joint Venture area for both wetland acquistion and enhancement work. The Department of Defense has active JV projects underway at Dahlgren Naval Warfare Center and at Quantico Marine Corps Base. Other cooperative protection and enhancement projects are expected in the near future with many agencies, private organizations and individuals.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is currently working to establish a coalition of governmental and private organizations interested in wetland habitat conservation for waterfowl and the many other plant and animal species that depend on wetland habitat for their survival.

James S. G. Davenport, Virginia Department of Game and Inland

Fisheries Board Member representing the First Congressional District, had a vision and subsequently a plan at the state level to create and improve wetland habitat. His Virginia Waterfowl Restoration Organization, which is being established now, has as its basis a strong volunteer contingent working with private landowners. In short, the citizen group, along with agency waterfowl habitat specialists, will work with landowners to create demonstration waterfowl habitat areas to serve functional as well as educational purposes. Such a program is a natural to be implemented concurrently with the Joint Venture projects of the North American Waterfowl Plan. The two programs are mutally beneficial to a wide diversity of wetland dependent species.

As stressed earlier, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the Virginia Waterfowl Restoration Organization are ambitious but achievable undertakings if long-term commitments of time, funds, and perseverance are forthcoming from a broad spectrum of governmental agencies, private organizations and citizens. The NAWMP must have widespread political sponsorship that can only be initiated and maintained by continued strong constituent support.

President George Bush in an address at the Sixth International Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Symposium on June 8, 1989 reiterated a campaign promise when he said, "You may remember my pledge, that our national goal would be *no net loss of wetlands.* Together, we're going to deliver on the promise of renewal. I will keep that pledge . . . . Whenever wetlands must give way to farming or development, they will be replaced or expanded elsewhere. It's time to stand the history of wetland destruction on its head: from this year forward, anyone who tries to drain the swamp is going to be up to his ears in alligators."

The participation of private individuals and organizations is of equal importance to such high level governmental commitment. If you are interested in becoming involved in the implementation of the NAWMP or the Virginia Waterfowl Restoration Organization, there are several actions you can take:

- Request from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, your extension agent, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office information on land management practices that preserve wetlands and benefit wildlife.
- Purchase state and federal duck stamps whether or not you hunt; revenues are used for wetland acquisition or management.
- Support habitat conservation efforts by private organizations.
- Support state and federal legislation to protect wetlands.
- Educate people in your community about the importance of conserving wetland habitat.
- Support or organize private citizen efforts to conserve unprotected wetlands in your vicinity.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan probably represents the last opportunity to do something on a continental scale to save ducks and wetlands. The plan is billed as a waterfowl plan, but it is really a wetland habitat conservation plan that deserves our wholehearted support. □

*Fairfax Settle is a supervising game biologist with the Department's Wildlife Division.*

## Virginia Waterfowl Joint Venture Focus Areas

| FOCUS AREA | ACREAGE NEEDS Protect | Enhance | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| VA Eastern Shore (Seaside) | 14,500 | 500 | 15,000 |
| VA Eastern Shore (Bayside) | 7,000 | 800 | 7,800 |
| Pamunkey River Marshes | 9,200 | 100 | 9,300 |
| Chickahominy River Marshes | 4,400 | 50 | 4,450 |
| James River Marshes | 3,650 | 50 | 3,700 |
| Back Bay/N. Landing River Marshes | 8,300 | 500 | 8,800 |
| Rappahannock River Marshes | 4,150 | 200 | 4,350 |
| Mattaponi River Marshes | 2,500 | 100 | 2,600 |
| York River Marshes | 1,400 | 250 | 1,650 |
| Western Bayshore Marshes | 2,475 | 275 | 2,750 |
| Total | 57,575 | 2,825 | 60,400 |

*The canvasback* (Aythya valisineria) *is a symbol for the plight of waterfowl across the country. Hopefully, with the dedication of us all—hunters and nonhunters alike—we can bring waterfowl back to our skies and our waters; photo by Lynda Richardson.*

# Stewart's Creek Wildlife Management Area

A new wildlife management area has been acquired by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as the result of what some might call a rescue attempt with a happy ending—for both the wildlife and the sportsman. Today, Stewart's Creek Wildlife Management Area, an 1,100-acre tract in Carroll County in southwest Virginia opened to the public in April 1989, includes 4½ miles of fine brook trout waters and rugged mountain terrain harboring more than a few ruffed grouse and wild turkeys. But not too long ago, the area was threatened with destruction.

Once ranked as one of the top 10 native brook trout streams in the state in terms of trout biomass and abundance, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) immediately took action two years ago when the area was threatened with severe logging and potential destruction of its trout waters through siltation. Unfortunately, before the purchase of the property was made, the landowner already had pushed through an extensive logging road network, doing substantial damage to the water quality of the stream. However, once the land became the property of the VDGIF, the Virginia Department of Forestry came to the rescue, providing the manpower, the equipment, and the expertise to reclaim the entire road system in three days—in all, a remarkable feat.

According to VDGIF fish biologist Joe Williams, the stream suffered a major setback in brook trout reproduction as a result of the siltation caused by the logging road construction, losing at least one year class of trout. However, the fishery is still in pretty good shape, and is expected to increase in quality as the waters continue to clear up following the rehabilitation work.

Location: The area is southeast of Galax on the North Carolina side of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Take exit 1 off Interstate 77. Trailblazer signs from there will lead you to the management area.

Facilities: Two parking lots are available.

Fishing: The brook trout fishery is recovering from the heavy siltation caused by the construction of logging roads that have since been reclaimed by the Virginia Department of Forestry and VDGIF. However, in an effort to protect the recuperating fishery, a *no harvest* regulation is in effect on the stream, along with single hook and artificial lures only allowed. Hopefully, after two years, this regulation will be relaxed, and some harvest will be allowed. The best place to fish on the creek is above the fork where the North and South Forks of Stewart's Creek come together. Follow the road from the lower parking lot about ¼ - ½ mile before climbing down to the stream and fishing upstream.

Hunting: Hunting is allowed on the area during the regular season. Grouse and wild turkey will probably be your best bets in this steep and rugged terrain.

Restriction's: No harvest of brook trout is allowed. No horseback riding. All hunting and fishing regulations applicable to Carroll County are in effect. Check your VDGIF game and fish law digests for details. □

*Stewart's Creek; photo by Joe Williams.*

# Southwest Treasures

Southwest Virginia is the home of three wilderness areas—Mountain Lake, Shawvers Run, and Barbours Creek—that stretch across the mountains of Giles and Craig counties. Protected by law from development and logging, but open to hunting and fishing, this trio has much to offer the Commonwealth sportsman. Let's take a closer look at each of these areas.

*by Bruce Ingram*

*photos by Cramer Graphics*

*Barbours Creek Wilderness Area*

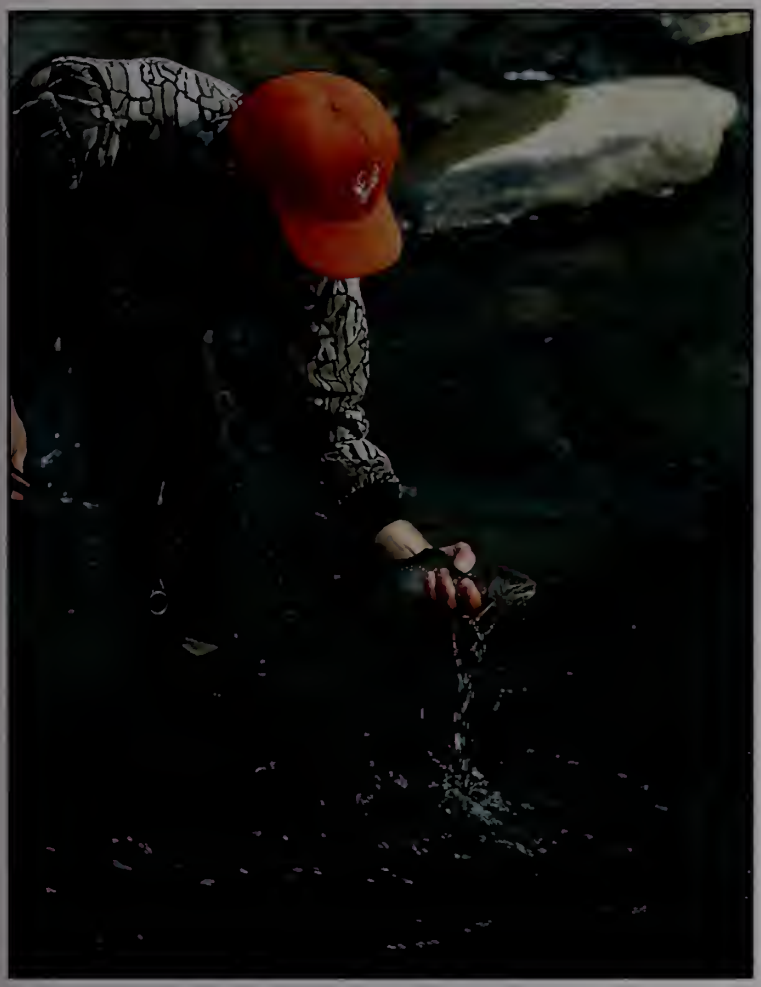
The first time I visited the Barbours Creek Wilderness Area still stands out in my mind. I was able to land four native brook trout from the stream that gives the locale its name. Although none of the fish were large—they ranged from five to just over seven inches—the trout were indicative of the quality sport that one can find in the wilderness area. Barbours Creek is a fine trout stream, having native brookies in its upper reaches and plenty of stocked trout in its lower waters. This 5,700-acre wilderness area also has many other charms to recommend it, says Paul Paradzinski, a forester for the United States Forest Service.

"Fishing is certainly one of the main attractions of the Barbours Creek Wilderness Area and that activity is very much in keeping with the concept of what a wilderness should be used for," he stated. "Lipes Branch, another stream in the area, has native brook trout as well and small fingerlings are stocked, too."

Wilderness areas are open to hunting, but no mechanized or motorized vehicles are allowed. Since road building is not permitted and because there is a lack of grassy clearings in Barbours Creek, there is little of that edge type habitat that deer and turkey need. So, populations of those two species are fairly low. The isolated nature of Barbours, though, makes it a great place for black bear.

"A major fire that occurred in the 1980s will actually help the cause of wildlife there," says Paradinski. "In the area where that fire happened, some 30 percent of the trees were killed. This destruction will help such species as deer and grouse which will be attracted to the new growth that will spring up."

Barbours Creek, which is situated almost entirely in Craig County with a small tip in Alleghany County, has an altitude of 3,600 feet at its highest point (Potts Mountain) and an altitude of 1,800 at its lowest (Pines Campground). The forester says that the wilderness also possesses a multipurpose trail.



*Trout fishing in Barbours Creek Wilderness Area*

*Morel*

*Fire pink* (Silene stellata)

"Lipes Branch Trail runs from the Pines Campground up Potts Mountain for a distance of some two and a half miles," relates Paradzinski. "This trail really has potential for someone who likes to fish, hike, or ride horseback. Lipes Branch has plenty of trout in it, and the trail is a beautiful one to hike on. There's also a horse corral at the campground which is very convenient for people who like to ride."

## *Shawvers Run Wilderness Area*

The Shawvers Run Wilderness Area is situated right next to Barbours Creek, and like its neighbor, the vast majority of Shawvers' 3,665 acres is in Craig County with just a little bit of real estate within Alleghany County. There are also several other similarities—and important differences—between the two areas.

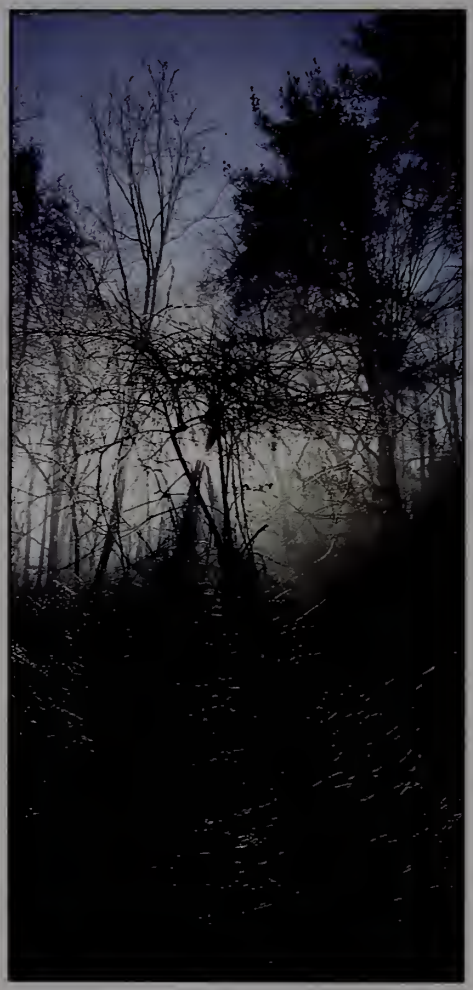
"Shawvers doesn't have any real trails within its confines," said Paradzinski. "Like Barbours, it is characterized by oak-hickory forests and pine stands. However, Shawvers I would say is more rough and rugged—it's just a mishmash of mountain land. Two small creeks in the area, Shawvers Run and Valley Branch, have the potential to be good native trout fisheries. Not a lot of fishermen or hunters go to Shawvers, because the area is so primitive."

Like Barbours, Paradzinski relates that the deer and turkey populations in Shawvers are not that high. Bear, though, have a pretty good situation in this isolated area.

A prime way to view both the Barbours Creek and Shawvers Run Wilderness Areas is via the Potts Mountain Jeep Trail. This dirt and gravel road runs for some seven miles along the outer fringe of the two wilderness areas. Access to the trail can be gained from the Sweet Springs Turnpike which forms the northern boundary of Barbours Creek and the southern boundary of Shawvers Run.

The Sweet Springs Turnpike has an interesting history, by the way. The road served as the manner in which George Washington and other individuals crossed Potts Mountain on their way to take the mineral baths of Sweet Springs. The turnpike today, in effect, divides the two wilderness areas.

Although there are not trails per se



*Winter in Shawvers Run Wilderness Area.*

*Turkey* (Meleagris gallopavo)

*Scarlet tanager* (Piranga olivacea)

in Shawvers, Paul Paradzinski emphasizes that this fact is not a liability for the area. "You can go anywhere and you might come across something that has not been seen by humans for decades," says Paradzinski. "And I think it's important that there be places like that in Virginia. It takes a special sort of person to go out into the wilderness."

For more information on Barbours Creek and Shawvers Run, contact the Jefferson National Forest, 210 Franklin, SW, Roanoke, VA 24001 (703/982-6261). Send a stamped self-addressed envelope for a mimeographed map.

## *Mountain Lake Wilderness Area*

At 10,753 acres, Mountain Lake Wilderness Area is the largest one in the state.

Chief among the area's attractions is a high mountain bog. Called Big Soft Sleep or Big Good Bed, the bog has sort of a "springy" quality because of the sphagnum moss that grows within.

Bogs, which by definition are wet spongy grounds that drain poorly and typically have bedrock underneath, are often thousands of years old. Big Soft Sleep is some 10,000 years in age and is ancient even by bog standards. In only a few thousand years, however, as organic matter continues to pile up within its confines, Big Soft Sleep will revert to just another piece of forest land. Even now, the forest is encroaching on the bog's outer perimeter in the form of 100 to 150-year-old red spruce trees.

Another drawing card is the bird life that abounds in the Mountain Lake Wilderness Area. Species that normally are seen elsewhere in the Old Dominion only during the winter or during migration actually breed at Mountain Lake. Among these nesting species are juncos, least flycatchers, rose-breasted grosbeaks, hermit thrush, and various warblers.

My wife and I once spent a pleasant June day in the wilderness area tracking down the sounds of a kind that we had never heard before. The source of the mellifluous music turned out to be

*War Spur overlook.*

*White-tailed deer* (Odocoileus virginianus) *fawns.*

a hermit thrush—a close relative of the wood thrush which is an accomplished songster in its own right.

There are only a few places in the state that we can hear such beautiful avian mating calls, and Mountain Lake is one of them. Unless you journey to Mountain Lake or some other highland range in Virginia, you may have to go several states northward before you can hear these species' songs.

While you are gazing upward for birds, you may spy some 300-year-old virgin Eastern hemlocks. Amazingly, these stately trees survived—through random chance and just plain good luck—the logging operations that plundered many of these state's primeval forests during the early part of the twentieth century.

Another Mountain Lake flora favorite of mine is the area's ferns. A variety of species flourish in profusion there, at times creating a dense mat of undergrowth. Interestingly, according to biologists, a new species of fern has actually evolved at Mountain Lake in recent years. Apparently, two species exchanged genetic material, a not uncommon process in nature. Usually sterile offspring is the result of such a genetic sharing, but in this case a new species of fern came into being—possessing genetic traits all its own.

Hikers and backpackers have several interesting trails to explore. Two of my favorites are the ones that take me to Wind rock and the War Spur overlook; spectacular mountain vistas are the rewards for traversing those trails. Both trails are also well-marked and offer easy walking. All in all, the Mountain Lake Wilderness Area is a superlative place to visit!

For more information, contact the Blacksburg Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service, Route 1, Box 404, Blacksburg, VA 24060 (703/552-4641). A map of the district is available for a small fee and a stamped self-addressed envelope. □

*Bruce Ingram is the Virginia editor for* Outdoor Life *magazine and a frequent contributor to* Virginia Wildlife.

# Virginia

## 1989 STATE WATERFOWL STAMP
## Art LaMay

**Print Specifications**
Subject: Canada Geese
Image Size: 6 1/2" x 9"
Overall Size: 12" x 14"

**Regular Edition:** 14,500
S/N Print w/Mint Stamp $141.00

**Medallion Edition:** 2450
S/N Print, Gold-Plated Medallion, w/Mint Stamp $306.00

**Executive Edition:** 550
S/N Print, Medallion, Pencil Remarque, w/Mint Stamp $406.00

**Artist Proof Edition:** 350
Artist Proof Print, Medallion, Color Remarque, w/Mint Stamp $556.00

**Fine Art Poster:** $10.00

**Signed Stamp:** $9.00*

*Signed Stamp must be ordered as extra stamp.

**Scheduled Delivery Date:** June 1989

Contact the dealers listed in alphabetical order by city, for purchase of 1989 Virginia Duck Stamp Print.

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**Artists Choice Framing Gallery**
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**Cay Design Art & Framing**
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**Frame Factory**
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**Medlin's Art Gallery**
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**Deck The Walls VA**
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3405 Candlers Mountain Rd.
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Lynchburg VA 24501

**Mr. Frame, Inc.**
10848 Sudley Manor Drive
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**Gale Allen**
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Vienna VA 22180

**Beach Gallery**
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Virginia Beach VA 23451

**Framed Expression (VA)**
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Virginia Beach VA 23452

**The Brass Gallery**
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Virginia Beach VA 23462

**Village Gallery**
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Virginia Beach VA 23464

**Clark's Gun Shop, Inc.**
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**Valley Framing Studio**
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Waynesboro VA 22980

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## Correction

In the May 89 issue of *Virginia Wildlife*, we mistakenly credited Larry Ditto with the photo of the largemouth bass taking a popping bug. Tom Evans took the stunning picture, and we apologize for the goof.

## The 24th Annual Thanksgiving Window Watch Bird Count

Were you among the 660 participants who spent an hour last Thanksgiving Day recording the species and numbers of birds that visited your bird feeder? If so, you will remember that it is ideal recreation for all ages on that special day of family enjoyment at home. When the festive bird is in the oven on this coming Thanksgiving Day, why not enjoy an uninterrupted hour of relaxation at your window watching your well-stocked bird feeder? Chances are you will become a "regular" and yearly participation in the count will slip easily into your family's Thanksgiving traditions.

When you send in your count, carefully recorded, your "recreation" becomes a contribution to serious study when it reaches Dr. Ernest Edwards, ornithologist and professor of biology at Sweet Briar College, Virginia. He compiles and electronically processes your information in an ongoing study of long-term trends in bird abundance and distribution, and shorter term fluctuations in bird populations in areas near our homes.

Join us for the Thanksgiving Window Watch November 23! Forms may be obtained from Dr. Ernest Edwards, Sweet Briar, VA 24595. Good luck on your count. □

## Green Thumbs For Wildlife

In April, biologists and wildlife management supervisors of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries were hard at work developing 16 areas of public land as Habitat Demonstration Plots. They were out digging holes and cultivating rows of plants beneficial to wildlife.

These areas were set up at convenient locations for the public to view a variety of plants recommended by various natural resource agencies for wildlife habitat development in Virginia. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' habitat biologist Steve Capel says that the plots will give landowners an opportunity to "view and compare 18 different shrubs and 156 different herbaceous plantings to decide which ones will work best for attracting wildlife on their farms."

In three or four years, the Department's biologists will evaluate the wildlife usage of these various shrubs, grasses and legumes on the areas to see which species are preferred for nesting, feeding, loafing, and escape cover.

Demonstration plots have been planted at Elm Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Mecklenburg County, Chickahominy WMA in Charles City County, White Oak Mountain WMA in Pittsylvania County, Hog Island WMA in Surry County, Amelia WMA in Amelia County, Powhatan WMA in Powhatan County, James River WMA in Nelson County, Fairystone Farms in Patrick County, Gathright WMA in Bath County, and Clinch Mountain WMA in Washington/Russell/Smyth counties, as well as Lands End Refuge in King George County, and the Deerfield and Blacksburg Ranger Districts in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, and at Marion and the Powell River Reclamation Project. The public is encouraged to come out and take a look at these sites. Contact the VDGIF, Game Division, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104, (804/367-1000 or 1-800-252-7717) for more information. □

## Virginia Open Team Pheasant Championship

On November 3, 4, and 5, Oakland Farm Shooting Preserve will be holding its annual open team pheasant championship in Orange, Virginia. An event which has become popular in the Midwest, the championship is limited to 40 teams of two hunters and one sporting dog per team who race against the clock with six shells per gun to find and shoot up to six birds in 30 minutes. The rules have been kept simple to reward the teamwork between sportsmen and their hunting dogs. They are geared to reward good wingshots, sportsmanship and the effective bird finding and retrieving skills of sporting dogs.

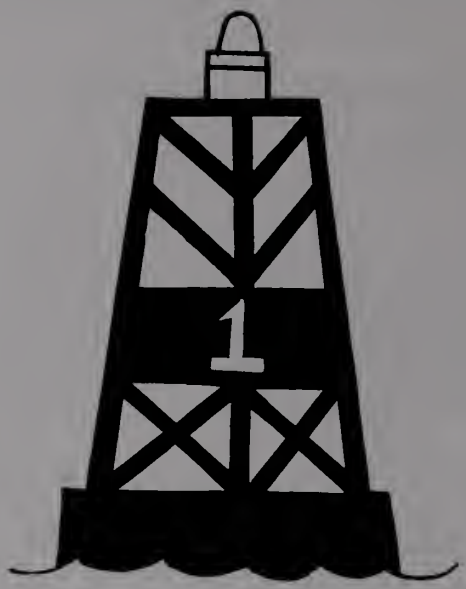
Scoring is based on the number of birds bagged, the number of shells used, the time elapsed. A $1,000 cash prize is split up between the top three teams.

Dave Pomfret, proprietor of Oakland Farm is accepting entries for this year's event until 8 p.m. on October 31. Entry fees are $160 per team ($80 per hunter), and hunting dogs need not be registered, but must be sporting breeds.

The public is welcome to view this event, though because of safety reasons, spectators are not allowed on the course itself. A barbeque and entertainment is planned for all on Saturday night. Contact Dave Pomfret at P.O. Box 1265, Orange, VA 22960, 703/854-4540 for details. □

# Boating Safety

*by William Antozzi*




## Good Boat Winterizing Prevents Trouble

**by William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer**

Our beautiful warm boating weather is gone for a while. Now is the time to winterize our boats. First of all, fill the gasoline tanks to the brim and add a gasoline stabilizer or conditioner to prevent gasoline oxidation, a process creating resin which can clog the fuel system. Engines should be fogged with a light oil. I use transmission oil which I pour into the carburetor of my running engines until they choke and stall. This fogging protects the pistons and valves against rust and corrosion and protects the carburetor interior. I then put a piece of light, flexible plastic over the carburetors and replace the backfire flame arrestor on top of the carburetor which holds the plastic in place.

Add antifreeze to a closed water cooling system in your engine, or if your engine uses water constantly pumped in from the water on which your boat floats, you should pump antifreeze through the cooling system. To do that, put the antifreeze solution (usually half antifreeze and half water) in a bucket, disconnect the intake hose and put the end in the bucket. Then run the engine until the antifreeze runs out of the coolant discharge aperture. When the discharge is the color of the coolant, you will know you have enough in the cooling system.

Some people merely drain their cooling systems. That method is all right provided all drain plugs are opened. If you miss one, however, you may be in trouble. If your boat has a drinking water system, you should drain the water and then replace it with a potable antifreeze. The antifreeze must be potable, because next spring you don't want contaminated drinking water. If you have a hot water tank, drain it and add some potable antifreeze. If your boat has a toilet for which you pump in raw water, shut off the intake seacock, pump out as much water as possible and pour antifreeze into the system. I use the regular automobile windshield washing solution for that purpose. If your boat is to be left in the water all winter, be sure to close all seacocks.

This is a good time to replace engine oil, so the old oil with its accumulated acids will not damage the engine. If you have a stern-drive, drain and replace lower unit oil, remove the propeller and lubricate the shaft.

Outboards should also have their shafts lubricated. Lower unit oil should be drained and replaced, because water can accumulate in with the oil and cause damage. Spray rust-inhibiting oil into the carburetor air intake and spray the power head with an anti-corrosive. Outboards may remain mounted during storage. If you leave your boat in the water all winter, keep the outboard motor in the down or vertical position.

Electronic equipment such as radios and depthfinders should be removed from the boat and stored in a warm dry, place. Mark all connections with tape or tags to facilitate reinstallation. Fiberglass surfaces should be waxed and metal fittings should be coated with petroleum jelly.

If you leave your boat in the water this winter, check it frequently. Break up ice formations to keep open water around your boat. □

# Family Outdoors

Spike Knuth

## The Pintail

A cold front had hit during the night, so the early morning air was crisp as a sharp wind blew out of the north. Suddenly a large flock of ducks appeared, fighting the wind as they headed for a nearby marsh pond. They approached from on high, then cupped their wings, gliding at great speed as they dropped quickly. The sun reflected off white bellies and long necks. The graceful shape and slim, pointed wings, plus the patented approach from high in the air revealed that they were pintails.

While they breed mainly in the prairies of north central U.S. and Canada, northwest to Alaska, pintails travel all major flyways. They are some of the greatest of waterfowl travelers, with some of them flying all the way from Alaska to the Philippines to winter. Along the Atlantic Flyway, they winter from New Jersey south to Florida.

The pintail is a medium to large duck. The drake is easily recognizable on the water by its long, slim, white neck that is frequently held in an upright position, and its long pointed tail feathers and a grayish body with a dark brown head. White edging at the rear of the speculum on the wings of both sexes is a fair field mark as well. The speculum is violet, bronze and green, bordered in front with a cinnamon-buff bar.

While the pintail migrates early in fall, it seems to migrate early on its return in spring. Some arrive to the flooded croplands and prairie potholes of north central North America as early as late-March or early-April. It is here the majority nest, although they have one of the widest breeding ranges of all ducks. Their breeding grounds are circumpolar—that is they include the whole northern portion of the globe where temperatures are suitable. They are closely related to and often mix with other varieties of pintails found in northern Europe and Asia.

Like all waterfowl, the pintail goes through a series of courtship displays and flights in trying to win a mate.

*Northern pintails* (Anas acuta); *photo by Larry Ditto.*

Often a group of drakes will pursue a lone hen in swift, twisting, climbing, diving and ground-skimming flight. Many pairs are already mated by the time they reach their breeding grounds and the hen will search for a nesting site in the first week of her arrival. It's not unusual for the hen to choose a site a mile or more away from water. On the other hand, she may nest right at the water's edge, though usually on a high spot. The nest is merely a hollow, formed by the hen as she twists and turns on the ground vegetation amid grassy habitat.

Egg laying begins in April, resulting in broods being hatched by early June if all goes well. An egg a day is laid until a normal clutch of six to 12 are cradled in the down-lined nest. The eggs hatch in 22 to 24 days. Biologists find pintails to be very prolific under ideal conditions, but especially poor breeders under bad conditions. The drought of recent years coupled with a continued loss of wetlands has devastated pintail populations. For the third time in this decade, pintails have dropped to a record low. In 1988, their populations decreased 18 percent from 1987.

While the female is raising her brood, the drakes join other restless males as they search out large shallow lakes or flowages to begin their molt, often flying great distances to do so. During the molt they are flightless and vulnerable to predators, so they seek out large open expanses of water, or heavy growths of emergent vegetation. They regain their normal plumage later in fall. The female will molt a little later as she cares for her growing brood.

Meanwhile, the young pintails grow rapidly and like most baby ducks, utilize insects as a major food source. As they grow into adulthood, their diet becomes nearly 90 percent vegetable matter, including pondweed, sedges, grasses, smartweed, and numerous other aquatic plants.

If alarmed, they raise those long necks to attention, then spring cleanly from the water, often bunching together as they strive for speed and altitude. The pintail's length—24 to 30 inches—plus its "racy" lines make it seem even bigger and faster. They have been clocked at 52 MPH in normal flight, 65 in a chase!

Known as sprig, sprig-tail, longneck, spike, sea widgeon or pheasant tail, they are more common in the West. However, count yourself lucky if you see one this winter in a freshwater marsh along our coast. □

# Recipes

by Joan Cone

## Swan Makes A Unique Meal

by Joan Cone

A one-year-old swan provides the best eating. You can recognize one by a touch of gray on its neck. Older swans can be tough.

After flying from the Arctic to Virginia, these swans are lean. While a swan appears huge, there is less to eat than you might expect. One bird will serve three or four.

When you pluck one, wear a mask covering your nose and mouth. Otherwise the dense, fine down may cause you to cough. After plucking your swan, roast it whole for this delicious dinner.

*Menu:*
*Roasted Young Swan*
*Barley With Mushrooms*
*Rutabaga Casserole*
*Curried Apple Salad*
*Pumpkin Nut Cake*

### Roasted Young Swan

*1 year-old swan, 3½-4 pounds, dressed*
*1 tablespoon flour*
*3 stalks celery, sliced*
*Salt and pepper*
*1 teaspoon sage*
*1 onion, peeled and quartered*
*1 tablespoon vegetable oil*
*Celery seed*

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Shake flour in a large size (14" x 20" ) oven cooking bag; place in a large 2-inch deep roasting pan. Add sliced celery to bag. Sprinkle swan cavity with salt, pepper and sage; add onion quarters. Close cavity with skewers. Brush breast and legs with oil; sprinkle with salt, pepper and celery seed. Place swan in bag. Close bag with nylon tie; make 6 half-inch slits in top. Cook 1½ hours or until tender. The last 15 minutes of cooking, split bag down the middle and brown swan at 425 degrees. Serves 3 to 4.

### Barley With Mushrooms

*4 beef bouillon cubes*
*3 cups boiling water*
*2 tablespoons butter*
*1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms*
*1 tablespoon lemon juice*
*1 cup pearl barley*
*1 teaspoon dill seed*
*Pepper to taste*
*1 teaspoon paprika*

Dissolve beef bouillon cubes in boiling water. Melt butter in a large heavy saucepan. Add sliced mushrooms and lemon juice. Saute 1 minute and then stir in barley, hot bouillon, dill seed and pepper. Simmer tightly covered over low heat for 35 to 40 minutes until barley is tender and much of the liquid is absorbed. Do not overcook; the barley should be coated with a creamy sauce. Stir in paprika 5 minutes before serving. Serves 6.

### Rutabaga Casserole

*4 cups sliced rutabaga*
*2 tablespoons butter or margarine*
*½ cup cream*
*1 egg, beaten*
*1½ tablespoons brown sugar*
*½ teaspoon salt*
*¼ teaspoon nutmeg*
*½ cup corn flake crumbs*

Cook the rutabagas until tender. Mash and add butter, cream, beaten egg, sugar, salt and nutmeg. Turn into a casserole and sprinkle top with corn flake crumbs. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 30 minutes or until hot throughout. Makes 6 servings.

### Curried Apple Salad

*4 Granny Smith apples*
*1 cup chopped celery*
*½ cup walnuts, coarsely chopped*
*½ cup golden raisins*
*¼ cup mayonnaise*
*¼ cup sour cream*
*1 tablespoon lemon juice*
*1 teaspoon sugar*
*½ teaspoon salt*
*½ teaspoon curry powder*

Core and cube apples. In large bowl, combine apples, celery, nuts and raisins. In small bowl, blend together remaining ingredients; pour over apple mixture and toss lightly with a fork until apple pieces are well coated. Serve on crisp greens. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

### Pumpkin Nut Cake

*1 1/3 cups vegetable oil*
*1 can (1 pound) pumpkin*
*2 cups sugar*
*2 eggs, beaten*
*3 cups flour*
*1 teaspoon salt*
*2 teaspoons baking powder*
*2 teaspoons baking soda*
*2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice*
*½ cup chopped pecans*

In a large mixing bowl, combine oil, pumpkin, sugar and eggs; beat well until blended and light. Combine dry ingredients and gradually add to pumpkin mixture; beat well. Add nuts. Spoon batter into a well-greased 10-inch tube pan. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 1 hour or until cake tests done. Makes 16 to 20 servings.

# Habitat

by Nancy Hugo

## Persimmon

Pucker up when you say persimmon. It will train your mouth for the taste of the unripe fruit.

Actually, the taste of an underripe persimmon is less a matter of flavor than it is a matter of pain. "It makes your teeth stick to your lips" and "it feels like a vaccum cleaner in your mouth" are two of my favorite descriptions of post-persimmon syndrome. Captain John Smith's description of his first experience with the fruit of our native persimmon wasn't bad either. "If it be not ripe," he wrote, "it will draw a man's mouth awrie with much torment."

*Persimmons; photo by Larry Ditto.*

Unfortunately, one taste of an underripe persimmon tends to wipe out any desire on the part of the taster to keep trying for a ripe one, but ripe persimmons are as delicious as they are sometimes hard to get. Against a grey November sky, the orange fruit in the top of a persimmon tree looks as luscious as it is hard to reach. "The longest pole takes the persimmon," goes the proverb, proving it's not just opossums who know where the persimmons are.

The problem is, although persimmons are generally small trees (forget the 116-foot specimen growing along the Blackwater River, most are under 50 feet), mature trees tend to hold their fruit high in their tops. If you can find a young tree, it may have fruit at picking level. Still, two problems remain for the would-be picker—how do you tell if the fruit is ripe and how do you beat the opossums to it?

Contrary to popular belief, persimmons are not necessarily palatable after the first frost. Frost is to ripe persimmons as marriage is to childbearing—they usually go together, but one doesn't necessarily cause the other. You will still find people who insist that frost is necessary to wipe out the astringency caused by the presence of tannin in persimmon fruit, but the truth is that persimmons will be sweet, frost or no frost, as long as they've had a season long enough to ripen. According to persimmon expert Lee Reich, persimmons in the North will sometimes continue to ripen following light frosts, but their development is arrested when the temperature dips into the 20's, and although they may soften and shrivel on the tree, they'll still be astringent.

In the South, persimmons are usually ripe by late fall, but my mouth isn't truly relaxed about tasting persimmons until December. A persimmon isn't ripe until its skin has begun to shrivel and it's about as mushy as an overripe tomato. Then the yellow pulp of the ping-pong ball sized fruit is as sweet as a date and delicious cooked in breads and puddings, and even used to flavor ice cream.

The persimmon gatherer still faces competition from a host of other animals, however. Foxes, raccoons, black bears, skunks, deer, robins, bluebirds, mockingbirds, and cedar waxwings, all love persimmons, but the real persimmon aficionado is the opossum. To that image of persimmons silhouetted against a November sky, add moonlight and the shape of an opossum or two—or three or four—in the top.

"Many a 'possum hunt ends at the foot of a 'simmon tree" goes one old saying, and many old-timers refer to the persimmon as possumwood. "Possums and 'simmons come together and both is good fruit," goes another saying, and some hunters believe a Thanksgiving possum feast is more delicate "if the possum's fed on 'simmons first."

If you'd prefer to beat the opossums to the persimmons, try gathering them before they're fully ripe. If they've begun to color and soften on the tree, you can pick them and put them in a bag with an apple and the ethylene gas from the apple will finish the ripening process.

Our native persimmon, *Diospyros virginiana*, occupies a range from southern Connecticut to Florida and east to Texas. You'll find it in deciduous forests, abandoned fields, and fence rows. It has beautiful shiny dark green foliage and bark that tends to fissure into squares. It likes sandy soil but will grow almost anywhere that's not soggy. Transplanting a persimmon is hard because of its long tap root, but you can grow one from seed fairly easily. Since male and female flowers are borne on separate trees, be sure you're growing a female if you want 'simmon fruit. □

# The Gray Fox

by John Pagels
photo by Steve Maslowski

It would probably be dangerous to look a gift fox in the mouth. But peering into a fox's mouth to determine tooth wear can tell you much more than its approximate age. With only the skull and teeth—and a trained eye—you would immediately recognize the species you had and see characteristics of the order Carnivora and the family Canidae, a family that also contains the domestic and wild species of dogs, wolves and the coyote. You would have a fairly good idea about its diet, too.

The gray fox, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*—even its name is a mouthful—occurs statewide in Virginia and ranges throughout most of the United States and into South America. The red fox, too, is found statewide but as the keen observer realizes, the gray fox differs from its slightly larger relative the red fox in more ways than coloration and size. A primary difference is their habitat. Chances are that if you see a fox near a meadow or agricultural area it will be a red fox. Gray foxes tend to stick to forested, brushy and rocky places. Both species, however, take advantage of the richness of edge situations and do best in areas where a variety of different habitats adjoin one another within a small area.

As an adaptation for their carnivorous lifestyles, most canids possess relatively great speed and are known for their endurance in a chase. The gray fox is no exception. But as we know so well, there are always trade-offs, and outstanding runners are capable of little generalized movement. Imagine your dog, horse or a deer shinnying up a tree. A gray fox, however, can climb. They have been observed climbing more than 50 feet up a branchless trunk and have been known to jump from branch to branch. Though they climb trees primarily to forage and rest, a whelping den was reported more than 20 feet up in a hollow tree. A gray fox also climbs to escape. Indeed, its tendency to "tree" and the general ruggedness of its preferred habitat make the gray fox an undesirable subject in traditional fox hunts on horseback. To aid in its climbing activities, it has, like many other climbers, recurved claws that fit into the irregularities of the tree surfaces. Too, functional anatomist Milton Hildebrand observed that the gray fox may be able to rotate its forearm more than other canids, a climbing adaptation for grasping with the forelimbs while the hindlimbs are propelling the animal. When descending, the gray fox may run headfirst down trees that are leaning, but it typically must back down tail first.

Dens of gray foxes are usually not very conspicuous and along with elevated sites, may include hollow logs, spaces under rocks, piles of brush and the abandoned burrows of other animals such as the woodchuck. Whelping dens are in similar areas. The gray fox typically mates in late winter or early spring, and the pups, usually numbering about four, are born after about 60 days. There are highly isolated cases of individuals living up to 15 years, but mortality is high among the juveniles and yearlings. In the wild, few gray foxes live for more than two or three years. Man has something to do with fox mortality, including hunting and trapping, and in modern-day Virginia, highway mortality is no small factor.

*Foxes—Killers—Wildlife—Poultry.* These four terms were linked together in earlier years when many considered animals as either "good" or "bad" and predators were definitely bad. Bounties prevailed in many areas. But now, most everybody has a greater appreciation of the role of predators in natural systems. Many folks also have a greater appreciation for all organisms, regardless of a "role," or some purported benefit to humans.

As expected, much is known about the diet of foxes. A look into the mouth of a gray fox reveals carnivorous dentition, teeth that are largely adapted for piercing and cutting meat, a relatively soft kind of food. But the diet of foxes can be surprising. Mammalian prey, especially rabbits and many species of mice, is very important to the gray fox, but in the warm months, grasshoppers and beetles and other invertebrates are often the dominant prey items. Further, many kinds of berries and fruits are consumed whenever available. An observation that tells much about the opportunistic feeding of the gray fox and its locomotory skills is one that also ended sadly for the fox. During a Minnesota blizzard, a gray fox died when it became entangled in branches of a flowering crab tree while feeding on apples 18 to 20 feet high.

Apples have a long history of causing problems. □

*John Pagels is a biologist at Virginia Commonwealth University who specializes in Virginia mammals.*